

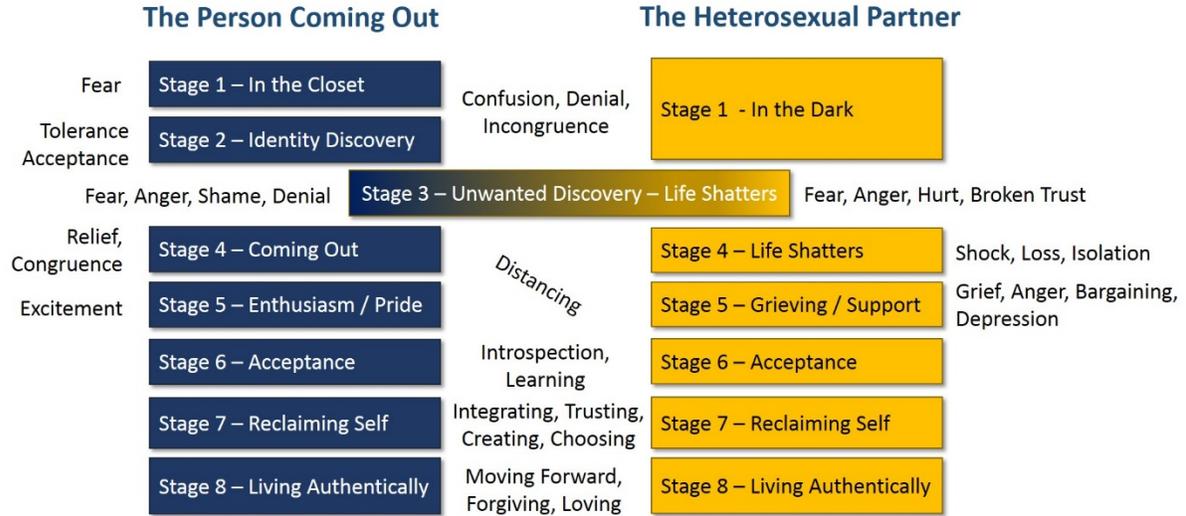


Coming Out Process Roadmap for Mixed-orientation Relationships

August, 2014



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The OCO Coming Out Roadmap for Mixed Orientation Relationships Seeking Understanding & Compassion for the Overall Process



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Stg #	The Person Coming Out	The Heterosexual Partner
1	<p data-bbox="261 485 639 541">In the Closet – Confusion, Denial & Incongruence</p> <p data-bbox="261 579 818 636">Staying within the mainstream of social acceptance through lack of self-knowledge or pretense/denial.</p> <ul data-bbox="261 678 829 1879" style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes internal thoughts and desires and external behaviors as possibly LGBTQ, but considers these to be unacceptable. • Experiences emotional turmoil involving religious or other beliefs, or internalized homophobia • Copes through <i>repression and denial</i> of socially-unacceptable thoughts/behaviors • Feels Confusion¹ - Could I be gay? • Separates sexual behaviors from sexual identity (<i>incongruence</i>) • Redefines the meaning of sexual behaviors • Comparison¹ – Combines socially-acceptable heterosexual marriage and family with socially-unacceptable, same sex desires or behaviors • Lives in fear and denial of the potential social, legal and economic negative consequences of unwanted disclosure, including: <ul data-bbox="358 1266 829 1686" style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Social rejection ○ Conflict with family, friends, coworkers ○ Verbal abuse ○ Violence ○ Financial loss ○ Blackmail ○ Legal actions ○ Restrictions on custody and placement of children ○ Restrictions on having/adopting children ○ Criminalization of behavior, including capital punishment in some countries • Maintains an <i>incongruent</i> dual life of hidden socially-unacceptable inner desires and behaviors vs socially-acceptable external desires and behaviors • May feel sad, lonely and isolated • May feel despair or depression 	<p data-bbox="859 485 1237 541">In the Dark – Confusion, Denial & Incongruence</p> <p data-bbox="859 579 1398 699">While being outwardly socially acceptable, something doesn't feel right in the most intimate parts of the relationship in comparison to societal norms.</p> <ul data-bbox="859 741 1409 1686" style="list-style-type: none"> • Personally experiences full congruence between external sexual behaviors and internal sexual identity • <i>Assumes</i> the external sexual behaviors of LGBTQ partner are congruent with their internal sexual desires • Is <i>unaware</i> of LGBTQ partner's inner emotional conflicts and hidden external behaviors. • Feels confusion about low frequency or desire associated with LGBTQ partner's external sexual behaviors or degree of intimacy in the relationship. • <i>Comparison</i> – Asks: <i>What is wrong with me?</i> Experiences an undermining of self-image, self-identity and sexual desirability. • <i>Repression and denial</i> of intuitive feelings – May be aware that something doesn't feel right about the intimate parts of the relationship, but has no idea as to why. • Maintains an external image of the relationship that is <i>incongruent</i> with the inner concerns about the relationship or about themselves. • May become suspicious about inconsistent and <i>incongruent</i> communications from their LGBTQ partner. • May feel sad, lonely and isolated. • May feel despair or depression.



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2	<p>Identity Discovery – Moving into Self-Acceptance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively seeks the answer to the question: <i>Could I be gay?</i> Actively seeks out more information about LGBTQ Actively seeks out and increases contact with LGBTQ friends and community Share personal experiences with the LGBTQ community to discover a new self-identity. Discovers that I am not alone and reach a state of Tolerance¹ about the possibility of LGBTQ. More clearly recognize the reality and fear of the potential social, legal and economic negative consequences of coming out, and gain the support of the LGBTQ community. Recognize sexual, social and emotional needs of being LGBTQ. Actively explore sexual behaviors with others of the same sex. Self-Acceptance¹ Yes, I am LGBTQ Now self-identifying with the LGBTQ community, begin to confront the societal intolerance of LGBTQ more directly. 	<p>Still In the Dark – Confusion, Denial & Incongruence</p> <p>(continued as before while the LGBTQ loved seeks personal self-identity as a private process)</p>
3	<p>Unwanted Discovery – Your Life Shatters (sometimes happens)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whatever your deceptions have been about your hidden life, they have been discovered by your loved one sooner than you wanted. Your relationship trust with your loved one is shattered because they discovered your deceit. You betrayed your loved one’s trust by withholding key information about yourself. You become worried and afraid about what this means for your future. 	<p>Unwanted Discovery – Your Life Shatters (sometimes happens)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following up on your suspicions about inconsistent and incongruent information, you discover your loved one is LGBTQ. Your relationship trust with your loved one has been shattered because you discovered their deceit. Your trust was betrayed by the one you loved the most. You become angry about the past, worried and afraid about what this means for your future.



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4	<p>Coming Out</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You experience the courage to overcome your own fears and disclose your status of LGBTQ to your loved ones. You experience the emotional relief of living more congruently and authentically, and letting go of the need to maintain a dual, hidden life. Your relationship trust with your loved one has been shattered, because they now know your secret You become worried and afraid about what this means for your future. Even though you fear their reactions, you come out to family, friends and coworkers over a period of time of your choosing. When you have not yet disclosed to everyone, you experience fear that others who know will disclose your status to others in a time frame that is not of your choosing. 	<p>Life Shatters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You experience shock, numbness, disbelief and denial² that this could be happening to you. You experience relief to finally understand the hidden reasons behind the prior behaviors of your loved one. Your relationship trust with your loved one has been shattered because you now know that the relationship was never as fully congruent and as intimate as you thought it was. You become angry about the past, and worried and afraid about what this means for your future You begin to question yourself and your loved one about all the years lived with deceit in the relationship. You lose trust in yourself and your own judgment You may go into the closet, not totally being truthful to others outside the relationship, in order to protect your loved one as they go through their own coming out process in their own time. You feel isolated² and alone. You've never heard of this happening to anyone else. You may feel like there isn't anyone to talk to or get support to get through this experience.



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5	<p>Enthusiasm / Pride</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coming out has been like popping the pressure on a pimple – it hurts at first but the constant underlying pressure and pain has now been relieved! • You begin exploring your new life and become self-absorbed, like a teenager. • You may find an exciting romance with someone new. • You may find yourself wanting to move on to your new life as quickly as possible. • Pride¹ - Immersed in LGBTQ culture ide • See the world as “gay” and “not gay” • Turning the corner - coming fully out of the closet • Confronting the heterosexual establishment 	<p>Grieving / Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grieving² the loss of the future <i>and the past</i> • Jumping on the emotional rollercoaster. • You may feel lonely, sad and withdrawn² • You may experience despair and depression² • You may find yourself resisting what is and bargaining² to somehow “return to normal” and create the future you imagined for yourself and your loved one. • You may still be angry² hurting and in pain for all the rejection you experienced from your loved one in the past, or are experiencing now as they seek a new life for themselves, and spend less time in relationship to you. • You may be judging and inflicting guilt on your loved ones for their deception. • You may be blaming and shaming you loved one for deceiving you, or for the way they are treating you now. • When you find a community of others, you discover that you’re not alone <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sharing experiences with others ○ Relief that someone else understands ○ Building new social connections ○ Supporting others supports you • Turning the corner – After the hurt, the pain, the anger, the judging, the blaming and the shaming, then you ask: <i>Now what?</i>
6	<p>Acceptance¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeing your new reality as it is • Doing the inner work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Introspection ○ Learning ○ Understanding ○ Compassion 	<p>Acceptance¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start meeting your new reality as it is • Letting Go – Part 1 - Distancing • Doing the inner work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Introspection ○ Learning ○ Understanding ○ Compassion



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7	Reclaiming Self <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being LGBTQ defines only a part of who I am • Discovering self-responsibility (Choice) • Conscious self-direction and choice • Creation – Where do I go from here? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reshaping your identity ○ Reorganizing your life ○ Integrating your whole self • Designing and creating the life you want • Trusting yourself • Trusting supportive heterosexual others • Finding new relationships • Reinventing previous relationships 	Reclaiming Self <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting out of the closet • Being in relationship to LGBT defines only a part of who I am • Discovering self-responsibility (Choice) • Conscious self-direction and choice • Creation – Where do I go from here? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reshaping your identity ○ Reorganizing your life ○ Integrating your whole self • Letting Go, Part 2 - Forgiveness • Designing and creating the life you want • Trusting Again • Finding new relationships • Reinventing previous relationships
8	Living Authentically <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving Forward • Authentic living • Living in Love Again • Giving Again 	Living Authentically <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving Forward • Authentic living • Living in Love Again • Giving Again

¹ Cass Model of Coming Out, provided by J. Kort on identity 1) confusion 2) comparison 3) tolerance 4) acceptance 5) Pride 6) Synthesis

² Kubler-Ross Five stages of grief – 1) denial and isolation 2) anger 3) bargaining 4) depression 5) acceptance